

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



# News Release

## *Great Lakes - Big Rivers Region External Affairs Office*

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### **Copies of Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge Available**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced the availability of the stand-alone Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

The CCP, developed through four years of public meetings, workshops, drafts and supplements, will guide management and administration of the 240,000-acres, multi-state refuge for the next 15 years.

The plan mirrors pertinent chapters of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) released in July 2006. A Record of Decision was signed August 24, 2006, selecting Alternative E, the preferred alternative, as the CCP for the Refuge. The stand-alone CCP is about 230 pages in length compared to the nearly 800-page EIS.

The plan identifies goals, measurable objectives and numerous strategies to improve habitat, foster wildlife-dependent recreation, and balance the needs of recreation with the needs of wildlife and other users. Maps of each of the 11 navigation pools within the refuge boundary are included in the CCP and show existing and planned changes to waterfowl hunting closed areas and other recreation-related zones and facilities.

Implementation of the CCP is ongoing with active work on several step-down management plans and preparations for public outreach and information. Any changes to recreation-related activities will not take place until spring 2007 or later.

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Copies of the CCP have been mailed to 58 public libraries in communities near the refuge and numerous elected officials and organizations. The public may pick-up a copy at refuge district offices in Savanna, Ill.; McGregor, Iowa; La Crosse, Wis.; and Winona, Minn.

Persons may also receive a copy by calling the refuge headquarters at (507) 452-4232, or by leaving their name and address at the toll-free number (888) 291-5719. The CCP is also available online at [www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/uppermiss](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/uppermiss).

With an estimated 3.7 million annual visits, the “Upper Miss” Refuge is the most visited in the U.S., exceeding levels at most national parks. It also has the added complexity of a major navigation system, including 11 locks and dams within its boundary. It is also a world-class fish and wildlife area which harbors 306 species of birds; 119 species of fish; more than 160 active bald eagle nests; thousands of heron and egret nests; spectacular concentrations of canvasback ducks, tundra swans, and white pelicans; and several threatened or endangered species.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.